

My brother Derek. He introduced this series where we're using the concept of good soil to talk about relationships. Now, last week, Derek talked about how our relationship with God reflects our relationship with others. And today we are discussing how our relationship with ourselves affects our relationship with others.

We're going to start with the passage of scripture. And I want to say it's not unusual for a rabbi, as Jesus was regarded, to be asked to summarize the law. When a teacher of the law asked Jesus which law was most important.

Jesus was prepared with a prayerful response. The most important one answered, Jesus, is this here, Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord, your God. With all your heart. With all your soul. With all your mind and with all your strengths.

Then Jesus says the words. That will be our focus this morning. The second is this. Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. Now Jesus is telling us that our greatest responsibility in life is to love God with all of our being.

And I think we all know this. Even as we struggle delivered. However, Jesus also says that we have a responsibility to love ourselves and others. Today, we will discuss what it means to love ourselves. We will begin talking about what isn't self-love first.

And I think most importantly, self-love is not self-deprecation. This is a tough one, is we're called to be humble in our lives as Christians. Self-deprecation is focusing on the negative in a way that lowers our self-esteem, how we think of ourselves.

I lived with self-deprecation for many years. It happened when I chose to believe the negative things that my parents and others said about me as I was growing up and as I accepted their image of myself. It became part of how I saw myself.

For many reasons. I was unable to know how God saw me. You see, God is truth. And we don't honor him by believing lies about ourselves or others. No one has ever used self-deprecation to live a deeper relationship with God or with others.

Second, self-love is not acceptance of our faults and sins. Ignoring who we are and our need to grow keeps us locked in sin and leaves us unable to share unselfish relationships with others. And a corollary to this is that self-love is not believing that because God loves us as we are, that everything in our life is fine

. Believe me, God does love us. And if we never grow to be the people He has called us to be, he will continue to love us. However. Like a loving parent. God shows us our sin and invites us to grow in our lives as Christians, to be the people God created us to be.

We need to be able to look inside ourselves in the light of the Holy Spirit. And see our sin and

accept who we really are. And having done that, we need to work with God through the Holy Spirit that He so generously gives us.

To leave behind our sinful ways and grow as Christians. In so doing, we honor God and prepare ourselves to establish honest and caring relationships with others. You see, if we don't first understand ourselves and who we are, if we don't accept the truth about ourselves.

And if we aren't willing to be growing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then all those things inside of us hinder our relationships with others. I want to turn now. We've looked at what is not self-love. Now we want to look at the biblical understanding of what self-love is.

And we'll turn to the Apostle Paul and the book of Romans. Paul wrote. And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

You see, God is truth and he will only speak the truth to you and I. When God invites us to look at ourselves, we will see ourselves as God sees us. I remember the first time that I had a real encounter with God.

I was. Little over eight years old, and my mother had died. And. In the darkness of that moment, I turned to God. I don't know why. It's not that we had established good relationships and prayer or church going or anything in our family.

But for some reason I just turned to God. And the power of the Holy Spirit came upon me in a way that sustained me through the experience. But what I remembered. Is. There is a spirit came upon me.

I saw the darkness within me. Now. I don't want this to sound wrong. But when I saw that darkness, I did not feel shame. You see, even as God revealed the truth about my life. He also revealed the depth of his love for me.

When God shows us our faults and where we need to grow. He does so lovingly. And that love frees us from shame. And enables us to use the power of the spirit as we grow in his love. Biblical self-love begins with the knowledge of what God has done for us.

You see at just the right time when we were still powerless. Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though. For a good person. Someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrated his love for us in the US while we were still sinners.

Christ died. For us. If I become focused on my sins, I lose sight of what God has done and is doing in me. While I am lost in sin, I cannot establish loving and honest relationships with others. In fact, focusing on my sin and my shortcomings is a strong path to self deprecation.

I invite each of you to look within, through the power of the living spirit, and to focus on God's truth about your life. Jesus died on the cross for me and each of you, not because of our goodness.

But because of his deep love for us. That love. Allows me to see the truth of my life. And surrender to the Life-Changing Power of the Holy Spirit. And it also shows me. What an honest, loving relationship is like.

Next Scripture. Since we have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him? For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of his son.

How much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life? Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. When I hear these words, I'm reminded of two things.

The first was a very good preacher. My senior pastor. Who, after I preached one Sunday on the Blood of Christ, questioned whether talking about the blood of Christ is relevant today. I honestly suspect that for many people he was right.

However, I shall never be ashamed of the blood of Christ. You see, I have life eternal. Only because of what Jesus did for me. His blood shed on the cross frees me to be made whole before God. And it allows me to serve God.

As one who has been saved by Greece. Secondly, I remember that Paul wrote these words. Knowing that he was a killer of Christians. This darkness weighed heavily on Paul, and these words are Paul's testimony of how the blood of Christ freed him from his dark past and allowed him to grow in God's love.

They are a humble reminder that God meets us where we are and frees us to live a life that witnesses to His power and love. If we now have a small vision of what self-love means, I want to finish by talking about how we become self loving and how it reflects our love for others.

First to become self loving. We acknowledge that we are sinners who have faults and failures. God shows us that a relationship begins with honesty. And as we see who we truly are and accept God's forgiveness. We are free to be ourselves in relationship with others.

Secondly, we are growing with the hope we have in Jesus. We recognize that God has given us the Holy Spirit. Do you understand what I'm saying? God has gifted to you the Holy Spirit to help each of us grow and become more like Jesus.

We understand the true relationships involves forgiveness. And Greece. And as for given people

who live in Greece were able to share those gifts with others. Thirdly, seeing ourselves. Are we okay? 944 Okay. Thirdly, seeing ourselves through God's eyes helps us to see others through God's love.

When we see ourselves as forgiven and loved, we can see others as needing God's love and forgiveness. We no longer see them as sinners who are unworthy, but as children of God for whom Christ has also died. And this enables us to form relationships that are grounded.

I loved the days when I trusted my memory. In our knowledge of ourselves and God's love for all. This type of relationship is authentic and powered in God's amazing love. Now it's important in forming genuine relationships that we don't see others as people.

We need to change. This is important, as you and I. And not change anyone. Do you hear what I'm saying? I can't even change myself. Without God's help. So I certainly cannot change others. And when I realized that it is the power of God working within me that has changed my life.

Then I understand that I am incapable of change without God's power. I truly understand that God is not calling me to change others. My task is to sincerely love others. And to invite them to receive the Life-Changing Power of the Spirit.

It is important that we use discernment in this process. Too many people believe that once they are married, they can fix all their spouses problems. Anyone here ever thought that? Well, I can't see any of you anyway. But looks like you all have good relationships.

Not only is this untrue, but it can lead to broken relationships. When we fail to fix them, whenever we try to change others, it will only lead to resistance and worsen our relationship. But finally, I have to say that we must be discerning in our relationships.

If another person shares our sin, we may find ourselves being drawn back into the sin. Rather than showing them the genuine and life changing love of God. What I mean by that is simply that. If my sin is an example.

Drinking. It's not a good thing to establish a relationship with a drunk. Not until I have found the strength in myself to change and to be free from that problem. But brothers and sisters, this is the way in which we establish honest and deep relationships.

Let us be in prayer. Almighty and precious God, our Heavenly Father. We are so grateful to you. For all that you have done. And they're still doing within us. Father. The power of a living relationship with you is that you become a part of our lives, a part of who we are.

It's not that you do something and then say Go your way. But every moment you're here, working with us, loving us, encouraging us, blessing us. And for that, we are grateful. Help us to

be people that. As we are whole in your love.

Reach out and establish loving relationships with others.